

“Go Fly a Kite!!”

by Gerald Giroux

THE 2ND COLE HARBOUR Scouts get excited when they are told to go fly a kite, because they love it! I know what you're thinking — flying a kite sounds more like an activity for Beavers or Cubs, but I'm talking about sport kiting. What makes sport kites so much fun is that they can be controlled. If you really like it and practice, you can do really cool tricks.

Getting Started

I was looking for an outdoor sport with the following criteria: (1) my whole family could do it together, (2) it could be enjoyed most of the year and (3) relatively inexpensive. Searching the internet, I came upon sport kiting and it seemed to be a good fit. I loved it from the beginning, bought my own kite and soon my whole family was kiting. As I'm always looking for new and exciting activities for our Scout troop, I considered taking the Scouts kiting. Checking with my daughter and son (second and third year Scouts), they said, “Let's do it”!

How to Fly a Sport Kite

Once you find a local kiting supplier, talk with them to see if they would consider training for you and/or the Scout troop. I was the only leader who had kiting experience, but the other leaders caught on right away, and so did the Scouts. It is best to get instructions from your kiting supplier, but here are some basics:

When you are first learning to fly a kite I recommend flying a small kite (no bigger than one and a half square metre in area) with two lines; this keeps it safe and simple.

The 2nd Cole Harbour Scouts are all smiles after a day of flying kites.



Photos: Gerald Giroux

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First you need to check the direction and strength of the wind. Make sure it is not too strong for the size of kite you are using (kites have a minimum and maximum wind speed rating).

Launch the kite as you would a normal kite. (See How to Launch a Kite.)

Once in the air, you control the kite by pulling on either of the two or four lines. Pull on the right line(s) to make the kite go right and the left line(s) to go left.

Try to keep the kite between the ten and two o'clock position. If you let the kite move to the nine or three o'clock position, the kite will stall and fall to the ground. (See How to Land a Kite.) Practice taking the kite from a position to the twelve o'clock position and back.

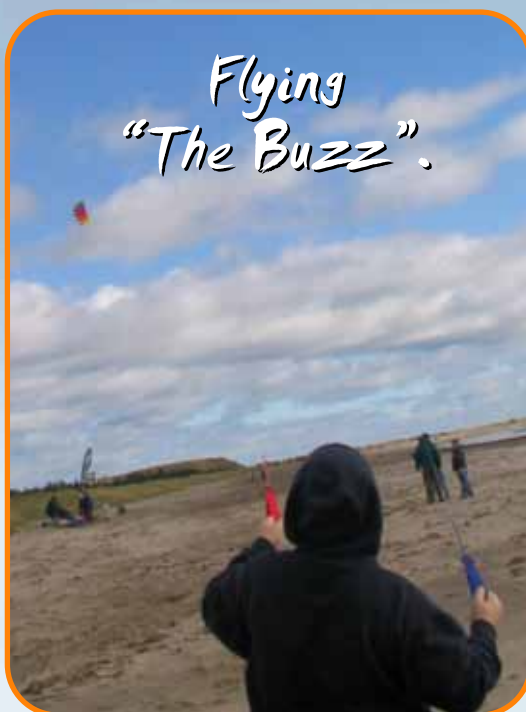
To pass a kite to someone while it is still up in the air, first make sure it is in the twelve o'clock position and straight above you. This is when the kite has the least amount of power and is safe to pass.

How to Launch a Kite

If you are the person holding the kite for someone, make sure they are looking at you. When they say they are ready just let the kite go and take a few steps straight back. Do not push the kite up, just simply release it.

How to Land a Kite

If you are using a two line kite, position the kite in the three or nine o'clock



clock position (this is also known as "at the edge of the window"). The kite will stall; then you ease it onto the ground. If you have a four line kite, the two thinner lines are called brake lines. If you slowly pull on them the kite will drift to the ground. Pull both lines slowly and evenly; this will take a bit of practice to have it come down without spinning the kite.

How to Pack a Kite

Some kites pack differently depending on the size or if they have handles or a bar. When you unpack the kite, notice how it was packed; this should make it easier to repack. The most important thing to remember is to protect the lines.

First, you need it on the ground. Once the kite is down, make sure it's free of debris (no seaweed or twigs). Tuck the kite bridles inside the kite and fold it lengthwise. Next wrap the lines on either the bar or the spool that the lines came on, put the spool/bar at one end of the folded kite, roll the spool/bar inside the kite and then put it inside the carry case.

What Kite is Best?

I think the ideal kite for beginners is the Flexifoil Buzz. It is a two line, .8 metre kite which can be used in almost any wind and suitable for ages five and up. The other nice thing about the Buzz is that even though it's just a recreational kite it acts very similar to a sport kite.

To find a local kite supplier try typing the following in your internet search engine "kite surfing {province and major city nearby}". For example, I typed "kite surfing Halifax Nova Scotia" and that's how I found my local supplier. You can also search for well known kite manufacturers like Flexifoil™, Ozone™ and HQ™.



Planning a Scout Kiting Event

I contacted the local kiting supplier and explained how we could have a win-win situation; the Scouts won by having a fun afternoon and the kiting supplier won by getting free advertising to over 20 Scouts and their families. They said they would love to do it and the Scouts' smiles would be all they needed in return. We also contacted the local newspaper and invited the public to come enjoy the event, and see that Scouts do more than just camping!

Running a Kiting Event

We had five kites (two of mine and three from the kiting supplier on loan) and 20 Scouts (two troops) so we decided to have two shifts of one and a half hours each. With ten Scouts per shift, this meant we had two Scouts for each kite. This is the best ratio; you can switch every fifteen minutes between the two and they don't get bored waiting for their turn. Each shift started with instructions; then one parent and two Scouts went to a kite. Instructors moved from kite to kite to give advice.

We used kites of varying sizes; three .8, one 1.4 and one 1.7 metre. As the Scouts got better we would let them try the bigger kites to feel a little more pull and have some fun. Cones sectioned off the kiting area on the beach to be sure no one would walk under the kites. (See Safety Rules sidebar.)

We brought some lacrosse sticks, footballs, soccer balls and Frisbees in case anyone wanted to play something else (they really didn't get used that much). After seeing the article in the paper, the public came out to watch our Scouts having fun. Everyone agreed that the kiting event went really well. In fact, one of the leaders enjoyed it so much that he bought two of his own kites the very next morning. Some of the Scouts have told me they have started to save to buy a kite of their own.

Summary

Kiting fits in perfectly with the Scouting program. It involves fun, the outdoors, can be enjoyed all year, and is something different. Experienced Scouts really enjoy teaching new Scouts how to properly fly and care for a kite too, providing leadership experiences. Go fly a kite! \

– Scouter Gerald goes kiting with his family and Scouts in the Cole Harbour area of Nova Scotia. Feel free to e-mail questions to: g.giroux@ns.sympatico.ca.

Kiting Safety Rules:

- Never underestimate the power of the wind.
- Never fly your kite in strong wind for the first time.
- Use a kite size appropriate for the conditions. When in doubt, try your smallest kite first.
- Always test your safety system and activate it if you feel you are losing control of your kite.
- Never allow yourself or anyone else to get between the control bar/handles and the kite.
- Never use a kite in a crowded area.
- Never fly in extreme weather conditions, in thunder, in lightning or at night.
- Never allow inexperienced kite flyers to use your equipment.
- Never launch, ride or jump upwind of people or hard objects.
- Give yourself at least 1.5 your line length from any obstacles.
- Ride unhooked when you are near hard objects.
- Never attach the safety leash "permanently" to your wrist or harness.
- Flying lines can cut when the kite is flying. Do not touch them and never let anyone touch the lines.
- Do not fly your kite near power lines, airports, roads, railways, people or animals.
- Remember, you are responsible for the safe operation of your kite and equipment at all times.
- Never leave your kite unattended.

Helpful websites



<http://www.flexifoil.com>

– leading manufacturer of kites

<http://www.atlanticwindsadventure.com>

– kite supplier from Halifax Nova Scotia (will ship across Canada). If you look under "Community", "Photo Gallery" then "Kiting with the Scouts" you will see pictures from our event.

<http://www.flyozone.com>

– leading manufacturer of kites

<http://sunshine.scouts.ca/bpp/firstpage.htm>

– Scouts Canada's Bylaw, Policies and Procedures

<http://www.awindowofchange.com/lesson.html>

– kiting introduction information